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ABSTRACT

Subjects were 96 college students who were assigned to eight experimental groups. Five groups took notes during or after listening to segments of a 16-minute tape-recorded lecture. Note-takers reviewed their notes during a 10-minute review session provided all subjects immediately prior to a 20-minute free recall test given 48 hours after lecture presentation. No difference in recall were found between note-taking groups, but all note-taking groups recalled significantly more information than groups which only listened or only reviewed a lecture summary. Only the group which took notes while listening and reviewed both notes and a lecture summary, and the group which took notes to a topical outline while listening, recalled significantly more information than the group which listened to the lecture and reviewed the summary. Groups which reviewed the lecture summary had more information available than groups which reviewed only notes. In addition, those taking notes during the lecture recorded, and therefore reviewed, more information than groups taking notes after lecture segments. Results indicated that encoding interference of note taking and the facilitative effects of topical outlines were neutralized by the effect of review, and that lecture summaries were inferior to subject-generated notes as review devices. (Author)

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USE OF STUDENT NOTES AND LECTURE SUMMARIES AS STUDY GUIDES FOR RECALL

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Previous research found that when the act of note taking was separated from listening to a segmented lecture, recall was facilitated. Students who took notes during an interval between lecture segments recalled more information than students who took notes while listening or students who took no notes. Subsequent research indicated that other coding/rehearsal activities such as taking notes on a topical outline between lecture segments further improved recall.

The present study compared 12 subjects in each of four note-taking groups with 12 subjects in a listen only control group. Subjects either listened or took notes while listening to a 16 minute tape-recorded lecture divided into segments of approximately four minutes each. The lecture, which was identical to that used in the previous studies, contained approximately 2000 words and 200 information units. Between lecture segments, subjects who took notes while listening were instructed to mentally review lecture content. Subjects who only listened to the lecture segments took notes between segments. Subjects either recorded notes "in their usual manner" or were provided with a topical outline on which to record notes. The control group listened to the lecture and reviewed from memory both during the time interval between lecture segments and prior to the 20 minute recall test given to all subjects 48 hours after the lecture. Experimental groups reviewed their notes for 10 minutes immediately prior to the test.

Three additional conditions were investigated with 12 subjects per groups: (1) a group which listened to the lecture, mentally reviewed lecture content between lecture segments, and reviewed a summary containing 50% of the lecture information immediately prior to recall testing; (2) a group which took notes while listening, mentally reviewed between lecture segments, and reviewed both notes and the summary before recall testing; and (3) a group which did not hear the lecture, but reviewed the summary before testing.

Statistical analyses revealed no difference in the number of information units recalled by note-taking groups, but all note-taking groups recalled more information than the listening control group or the summary only group. Only two groups recalled statistically more than the group which listened and reviewed a summary: (1) The group that took notes to an outline while listening and (2) the group that took notes while listening and reviewed notes and the summary.

Students' notes and the lecture summary were scored for information content to determine the amount of information available for review. Statistical analyses indicated that groups which reviewed the summary had more information available than did groups which had only their notes. Those taking notes during the lecture recorded, and therefore, reviewed more information than groups taking notes after listening.

The interference effect due to taking notes while listening, as reported in previous research, was compensated for by the review effect. This may be due to the fact that traditional note-taking procedures enable students to record, and therefore review, more information. In addition, preliminary findings indicated less value in reviewing lecture summaries than in recording and reviewing one's own notes.

Comparison of current data to the data from Thomas et al. (1975) indicated that traditional note takers benefited more from the external storage value or notes than groups which listen to lecture segments and then take notes. In contrast, the latter groups benefited more from the encoding function of notes than did more traditional note takers.

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